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Locally grown sweet corn is the rock star of summer. In the River Towns, it's even used to make ice cream.

By LYNNE S. GOLDMAN

In late July several years ago, a flatbed trailer piled with corn appeared in the parking lot next to our small village post office in Wycombe, Pennsylvania. A sign read: "Fresh Corn 50 cents an ear," with a metal honor box to deposit payment. Here was my quandary: If I bought half a dozen ears but they turned out to be mediocre, I'd be stuck with them. But if I bought only a couple and they turned out to be incredible, the trailer might be gone the next day.

As it turned out, they were incredible. I discovered the corn came from a neighbor who was suddenly overwhelmed with his backyard crop. Now, every summer a proper lean-to stand appears in July and it's the biggest news in town. If you're lucky enough to live in the River Towns, there's no need for me to tell you the location of this treasure trove of corn because most likely you have your favorite place to buy corn and would

defend it passionately. Corn is the rock star of summer. We all wait for it, relish it, grill it, boil it, butter it, and eat as much of it as we can. It is the centerpiece of every summer dinner and neighborhood potluck get-together.

Driving around the River Towns, you'll see a lot of corn growing, but most of it is field corn, which is used for animal feed or other commodities such as ethanol. Farmers plant field corn in the spring, let it dry on the stalk and harvest it in late October. But sweet corn is different.

First, it is a separate cultivar, meaning the seeds or kernels have been cultivated for specific qualities. According to the Penn State Agricultural Extension, sweet corn has genes that prevent or slow the normal conversion of sugar to starch during kernel development, making it sweet with plump, juicy kernels. You'll find sweet corn with different color kernels—yellow, white, bicolor, even blue—and in different varieties, such as Silver Queen, which is white, or Sundance, which is yellow. Sweet corn grown in the River Towns is usually available from early July to the end of September.

Sweet corn is truly one of the joys of summer. How many of us remember shucking corn in the early afternoon sunshine, then smiling when it arrived on the table, steam rising in the air? You can eat it on the cob, of course, or cut off the kernels to make other dishes such as succotash, salsa, chowder, bread, or pudding. It's so sweet you don't even need butter. (But why wouldn't you? Everything is better with butter!) Salt and pepper take it from divine to decadent.

I was once searching online for the best way to freeze corn (on the cob or off?). In a thread on Epicurious.com, one person said her grandmother always made Macque Choux. Intrigued, I went

looking for recipes and found a gem. From Louisiana, Macque Choux is like a Cajun creamed corn. In August, I make a big batch and freeze it so that in January I can remember summer all over again, even when there's snow on the ground. It is sweet and creamy, with a bit of a kick. Your dinner guests will swoon.

There are many more ways to delight in sweet corn here in the River Towns. One of the sweetest takes place each August at Owowcow Creamery, an ice cream shop with locations on both sides of the Delaware River. Owowcow produces an ice cream flavor called Sweet Buttered Corn, using sweet corn sourced from None Such Farms in Buckingham. It has a rich cream base with butter, sugar, and cooked sweet corn swirled in, finished with a dash of pink salt. The result is an astonishing ice cream that tastes like a bite of summer. 🌊

Lynne S. Goldman's work has appeared in every issue of River Towns over the last four years.

If you are looking for great corn in the River Towns, there seems to be a roadside stand around every corner. Don't hesitate to pull over when you see one. Also, check out these Bucks County locations: None Such Farms in Buckingham; Milk House Farm Market (grown organically at their farm in Upper Makefield); Maximuck's Farm Market in Doylestown; and Shady Brook Farm in Lower Makefield. In New Jersey, stop by Sweet Valley Farms in Ringoes or Kerr's Kornstand in Pennington.



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